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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses Russia's educational system. The major goal of all education in Russia is to train individuals to participate actively in some form of useful work. All educational policy is set by the Communist party. All schools are run by the state and are free. In 1975, ten years of compulsory, free education was introduced, starting at age seven. Education is provided in either general or polytechnical schools. After eight years of schooling, a student may enter a vocational training school or a specialized school. In 1979, ninety-eight percent of the Soviet students were graduating with a secondary-school education. Entrance level to the university is limited by a selection process. Only 20% of the high school graduates go on to the university. A guarantee to get into the university is to go to the USSR special schools in mathematics, science, or language. These schools admit only two-percent of the school population and are responsible for the growing reputation today of the Russian student as the brightest students in the world of mathematics, languages, and the sciences. As an example of schooling in Russia, the paper then describes the neighborhood kindergarten schools--Detsky Sads. In a Detsky Sad, one is apt to find about 150 children. Much of the learning is activity-oriented. In learning to write, there is a great emphasis in use of the right hand; left handedness is severely discouraged. The role of the school psychologist is discussed. (Author/RM)

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U.S.S.R.--CHILDREN AND SCHOOLING

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U.S.S.R.--CHILDREN AND SCHOOLING

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It is my pleasure today to take you on a short visit to the Soviet Union for a quick view of its educational system and its delivery of educational services to the school-aged population of the U.S.R. This country is little known to us but intrigues us because of its very different socio-economic and political systems.

The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics is a nation that is the largest in the world. The climate has extreme variations. The temperature in winter may go as low as -94° Fahrenheit in north-east Siberia, as high as 122° Fahrenheit in Central Asia, part of which is desert. There are some 120 languages spoken in the USSR. The religion of Russia is the Russian Orthodox Faith but there are other Christian religions as well as Jewish and Muslim groups. There are nearly 100 languages spoken in the Soviet Union.

To provide an introduction to the political and social forces intertwined with the educational programming in schooling in Russia, I am going to read an excerpt from "An American Family in Moscow by Leona and Jerrold Schecter (1975) as reported by their daughter, Doveen, a first grader.

"Doveen. A few weeks after I started school in Moscow, all the first-graders were told to wear their white aprons **the next day because there would be a special ceremony. The newcomers would be given their Oktyabryata pins.**

An Oktyabryata was a child of the Revolution, a child of October, since Lenin's Revolution took place in October. The Oktyabryatas were the grandchildren of Lenin.

The next day all the children were whispering excitedly. The classroom smelled of freshly starched white aprons. We were taken to the auditorium and lined up side by side. On the opposite side of the room stood the first-grade teachers and the directress, facing us. The directress gave a speech about our duties as the grandchildren of Lenin. She told us to obey our elders, help wherever possible, and be good citizens. She told us that if we followed rules and behaved civilly we would become Pioneers. It was the goal of all the first-graders to become Pioneers.

When the directress stopped speaking a group of Pioneers filed in. A patriotic song blared on the phonograph. Each Pioneer was given a pin to put on one Oktyabryata. The pins were either plastic or metal. They were in the shape of a red star with a picture of Lenin as a young boy in the middle. The plastic ones had a small photograph encased in them and the metal ones were embossed with the picture. We wore our pins every day.

After you have been an Oktyabryata you become a Pioneer in third grade. Then you are given a red kerchief to wear around your neck every day. To become a Pioneer you take a **pledge similar to the Oktyabryata pledge**. After being a good Pioneer you can join Komsomol when you are fourteen.

You must be recommended by your teachers and learn some Communist Party rules. During the time you are a member of Komsomol, until you are twenty-eight, you study Communist Party philosophy. Then some become Party members and some do not. It is very difficult to become a Party member because only a few are chosen."

All schools in the Soviet Union are run by the State and education is a planned decision at the highest levels. In 1975, 10 years of compulsory free education was introduced, starting at age seven. Children attend national schools where the lessons are delivered in their native language or they attend a Russian school, where the language is classical Russian. Which school they go to is according to their choice.

Education is provided in either general or polytechnical schools. After eight years of schooling, a student may enter a vocational training school, and after graduation, has a job in his or her chosen trade. There are also specialized schools which focus on a general education together with the necessary instruction and the skills needed for a profession. The course in the specialized schools lasts from two to four years and the students receive a government grant for attending these schools. Upon graduation, students obtain jobs in their profession. There are also special foreign language schools where children start at the age of seven, and schools for gifted children. As in our country, entrance level to the university is limited by a selection process. Educational

tuition at every level is free and students obtain stipends and other benefits when attending the university.

A Wall Street Journal article by Brand (1981) reported on a study by the National Science Foundation in 1979 which noted that only twenty percent (20%) of the high school graduates go to college or to the university. The rest must go into industry or agriculture. Choices or open-market systems regarding vocational options are non-existent.

A guarantee to get into the college or university track is to go to the USSR special schools in mathematics, science or language. These schools admit only 2% of the school population and are responsible for the growing reputation today of the Russian student as the brightest students in the world in mathematics, languages, and the sciences. According to the Wall Street Journal article, Professor Izaak Wirszup, Professor of mathematics at the University of Chicago, stated that "'the content and scope of the mathematics curricula' puts them far ahead of every nation including the United States," which points up our less than 100% commitment to gifted students contrasted to the Russians.

In September 1978, there were about 45 million school-aged children in the USSR. The budget allocation for education, science and culture in 1977 was 35,100 million roubles. (1.4-\$1.00)

The philosophical theories of their educational plans are based on their political underpinnings of communism. Soviet philosophers are anxious to bring education into close

relationship with life. In accordance with the Marxian doctrines, the basis of life for them is the relationship men and women establish in a factory, on a farm, or in an office. Education therefore is closely tied to the working life of a society. Schools train individuals to participate actively in some form of useful work. Education has as its goal the training of students to ensure harmonious relations between manual workers and intellectuals. Indeed a separation between manual training and liberal education is viewed as inharmonious. In the USSR, it is believed that ONLY THROUGH EDUCATION FOR, AND PARTICIPATION IN WORK, CAN A PERSON BE TRULY EDUCATED. THIS VIEW IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF JOHN DEWEY WHO SAID THAT A SOUND GENERAL EDUCATION SHOULD BE PROVIDED THROUGH VOCATIONAL STUDIES.

Since education in Russia is based on a social reconstructionist model of education, it is assumed that changes in society are a function of the educational (environmental inputs) processes and therefore for change to occur, nations must control and plan to assure the end result, or goal. Therefore, education in Russia is politically-based, socially-based, and educationally-based to assure that students will emerge as confirmed, well-educated Communist members of the USSR. As Communist members, it is hoped that they will be highly trained to work for Russian Society and its goals. By definition, therefore, curricula in the schools and methodology in education involves absolute control by the state.

The Communist Party sets the educational policy for all and appoints or elects local educational officials. These local officials then appoint the local school board and the local director of education. Local school board elect principals who then choose the teachers, subject to school board approval. Each of the republics of the USSR has an inspectorial system to insure that the Communist Party policies are carried through; to oversee teaching and classroom management; and to provide input into the system for new or innovative pedagogical tools, methods, or theories. These inspectors work closely with the school principals.

As I noted previously, the right to an education in Russia is constitutionally guaranteed and there is universal, compulsory education from age seven on. From age three months to three years, children have the opportunity to be in nursery school or crèche called YASLI until three years of age. Kindergarten, called DETSKY SAD, is from three to seven years of age. Compulsory schooling is from 7 - 16 years of age. In compulsory schooling, the first three years are labelled the elementary years, the seven following years are labelled secondary education. Admission to higher levels of education come with satisfactory completion of 10 years of schooling.

Earlier than 1917, approximately 70% of the population was illiterate. By the 1970 census, 48.3% of the population had been or was obtaining an education above primary school level. In 1979, 98% of the Soviet students were graduating with a secondary school education compared with 75% who graduate with a high school education in the United States.

For an example of schooling in Russia, I have chosen the kindergarten schools.

Kindergarten schools, Detsky Sads, are neighborhood schools as are all schools up to the college, university or technical school level. In a Detsky Sad, one is apt to find about 150 children. Some may live in the school's dormitories going home only on weekends or holidays. Others stay only for the day, a long day from around eight in the morning until five or six in the evening depending on the parents' working hours. Some of the Babuskas (grandmothers) care for the children and may pick them up earlier in the day. The state is seen as being responsible for and providing complete physical and health care as well as education for the kindergarten school child. The underlying goals of the curricula are to relate their education to the practical and real world. Therefore children are taught through sensory training methods to see an object, learn its name, be able to find (by feel with eyes closed), the object in a bag filled with a variety of objects and then to be able to abstract the concept of the grouped objects in the bag. For example children may be taught that yellow is different from green, that yellow is a ripe banana and green an unripened banana, and the yellow bananas are ready to be eaten. They also may learn that all the bananas, apples and oranges in a bag are called fruit. And they learn that this fruit is good to eat--shades of the Ferneuld method for educating

developmentally-disabled children with poor language skills. Activity leading to learning is also a strong assumption underlying social-ethical education in Detsky Sad schools. Role playing methods are used to teach social skills of cooperation and consideration. Children are placed in groups and given a group project, growing a garden, to incorporate and enhance the acceptance in the group of isolate or marginal group members (shades of cognitive behavior models prevalent in the U.S. literature today).

In learning to write, there is a great emphasis in use of the right hand and from a child's early years, left-handedness is severely discouraged. Therefore one finds very few, if any, children writing with their left hand.

No uniforms are worn in kindergarten schools, this form of dress is reserved for compulsory education years.

Special education is not highly visible and the removal of students with severe handicaps from mainstream education is a common occurrence. Students with severe disabilities attend special schools, most often live-in schools similar to our institutional settings. Students with marginal learning disorders or learning disabilities do the best they can within the regular school system and receive no special assistance. There are no advocacy groups for these children and a U.S. parent advocacy-model would not be an acceptable behavioral model for parents of children in the U.S.S.R. The gifted student is served very well as I mentioned earlier.

School Psychologists are ~~the~~ Educational Psychologists in the U.S.S.R. Sallade and Sallade (1979) have described their educational preparation for this role as follows, "This person has been a teacher and has some educational psychology courses mainly stressing character formation, collective orientation, physiological reflexes and speech and language development." They graduate with a master's degree in either general psychology or educational psychology. Those with a PhD must pass all the usual requirements for such a degree as well as "passing tests on Marxist-Lenin ideology and practical, in-school setting examinations (U.S.S.R. Minister of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, 1973, order 525).

The role of the educational psychologist in the school system is to do research, consult with supervisors, translate research findings for the supervisors to give to the teachers, so they may apply these findings to classroom curricula materials, text books, and classroom methodology. They may also do individual teacher consultation and even school administration consultation around school climate and leadership style concerns (Lomov-Volkov, 1972).

In 1976, Sallade and Sallade (1979) note that educational psychologists were directed by the Communist Party 25th Congress to focus for the next five years on teacher training, research on learning and curricula aids such as textbooks, audio-visual materials, political indoctrination methods and tools, and school-family-community unity.

* Psychology in the Schools in International Perspective, 3rd Edition, Edited by C. Catterall. Ohio: C. Catterall, 1979.

Psychological tests as we use them are verboten as they are viewed as discriminatory and biased toward upper social classes.

There is much more to be told but I now would like to share some slides with you of the schooling of children in the U.S.S.R.

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